

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

BLANDING'S TURTLE Emydoidea blandingii

DESCRIPTION

The Blanding's Turtle is a medium sized long-necked turtle ranging between 8 and 10 inches (20-25 cm). Its high-domed carapace (top shell) is black covered with pale yellow spots and streaks. The yellowish plastron (bottom shell) is hinged allowing movement of the front section. Its upper jaw is notched and its yellow throat and chin make it recognizable at a distance. Hatchlings have a brown carapace and a dark brown or black plastron, and range between 3.4 and 3.7 cm in carapace length.

RANGE

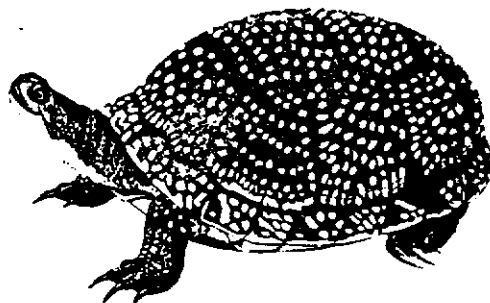
The Blanding's Turtle is found primarily in the Midwest but disjunct populations are found from southern Nova Scotia to Nebraska. In New England, it is found in eastern Massachusetts, southern New Hampshire and southern Maine.

HABITAT

The Blanding's Turtle is primarily aquatic preferring densely vegetated shallow ponds, marshes, or small streams. It is most often observed on land during nesting activities but has been known to feed and wander there as well.

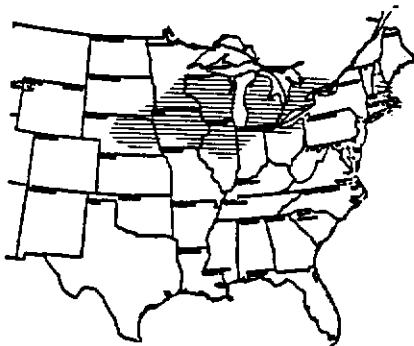
FEEDING HABITS


The Blanding's Turtle feeds on fresh-water plants, fishes, insects, crustaceans, and molluscs. On land, it has been observed eating vegetation, slugs, insect larvae, and earthworms.

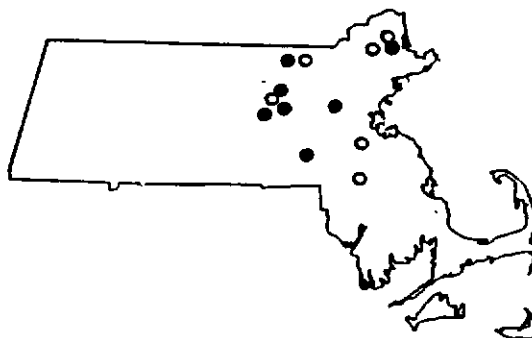


DeGraaf, Richard. Amphibians and Reptiles of New England. U. Mass Press. 1983.

(continued overleaf)



 Range



- Verified since 1978
- Reported prior to 1978

Breeding Distribution in Massachusetts
by Town

1987

NESTING HABITS

Female Blanding's Turtles reach sexual maturity and begin breeding at about 12 years of age. Females select unvegetated nest sites that are composed of hard soil. Plowed fields, railroad embankments, and dirt roads provide a suitable substrate. Eggs are usually laid at the end of June with emergence occurring in late September or early October. Clutch size ranges from six to eleven eggs.

POPULATION STATUS

The Blanding's Turtle is listed as Threatened by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. As this turtle is relatively difficult to study, it is not known how great a decline this species has experienced in comparison to earlier years. In Massachusetts, only seven nesting sites are currently known containing an undetermined number of individuals. A variety of factors are attributed to this species' low numbers. Development has destroyed appropriate habitat by altering the land and introducing human related impacts such as pet predation, road mortality, and vandalism. Hatchlings are especially vulnerable to these threats as well as to natural predation by fishes, bullfrogs, snakes, birds, and mammals. The presence of these threats in addition to the species' natural characteristics of late maturation age and low rate of reproduction (less than one-half of breeding age females reproduce yearly), make it difficult for the Blanding's Turtle to thrive.